President's reply.—Mr. Madhavan Nair, your representation on constitutional reforms including the amending of the Legislative Council Regulation and placing the Popular Assembly on a statutory basis is noted.

176. Reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Mr. Aiyappan Pillai Matevan Pillai (Member, Kalkulam taluk) first dwelt upon the circumstances under which the Assembly was brought into existence and explained its uses and value to the people. He then said that the attempts now and then made to demolish that institution failed of their purpose. The best course would be to improve it on modern lines so as to afford the people an opportunity to exercise their voice on the actions of the Government. He went into an analysis of the rules regulating the conduct of business at the Assembly and expressed his opinion that from time to time the institution deteriorated in respect of its popular and representative character, since the rights of the people became resricted gradually as a consequence of the revision of the rules. Coming to the manner in which the representations of the members were being treated, the Member expressed his dissatisfaction and observed that, whenever Government proposed to take action on a member's representation, that member should be consulted before final orders were passed.

The Member maintained that the high degree of literacy, public spirit and general advancement of the people, coupled with their wide outlook and experience in the working of ponular institutions, were sufficient qualifications for their being given larger powers. He therefore suggested:—

(1) that the annual State budget should be discussed and passed by the Assembly;

(2) that the sanction of the Assembly should be obtained for the levy of new taxes; and

(3) that the power of interpellation should be given to the Assembly.

Mr. N. K. Padmanabha Pillai (Member, Neyyattinkara taluk) said that, since the inauguration of the new Legislative Council with enlarged powers, it had become a moot question whether the Assembly should be allowed to continue at all, and if so, what should be the nature of the reforms that should be effected in its constitution. The non-official opposition against the resolution for reforming the Assembly came as a surprise to him in view of the limitations and restrictions placed on the free exercise of the powers granted to the Council. The chief improvements the Member desired to bring about in the present constitution of the Assembly were contained, in broad outline, in the joint memorial of the members of the Assembly which was getting ready for submission to the Government.

The Member then proceeded to explain why the Assembly should be continued. The working of the Legislative Council during the past two years had convinced the public that the existence of the Assembly was imperatively necessary for safeguarding the interests and protecting the rights of the people. The Council had, in his opinion, failed to make its mark and had not carried into effect any legislative enactment calculated to promote public well-being, in spite of the enlarged powers granted to it by the new Regulation. The Member then enumerated several subjects on which the Council had not been able to effect any substantial improvement. The control of the Council over a large portion of the State expenditure was but feeble and indirect, while, as regards the expenditure on railways, harbour and political relations, the Council was absolutely powerless. Another defect pointed out by the Member in the present Council was the inadequate proportion of the elected element therein, which had enabled the Government very often to make the Council assent to propositions and measures which were of doubtful public utility, and which evidently had no popular support. The utter helplessness of the Council in the matter of carrying into force the measures of reform advocated by the people pointed to the absolute necessity for the continued existence of the Assembly on a reformed basis.

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The Member thought that the reform of the Assembly should be brought about without duplicating the functions of the Council. The broad lines of reform suggested in the memorial referred to by him did not involve the overlapping of the functions of the two popular bodies to any great extent. The Assembly, being more truly representative of the people, should be given the power of interpellating the Government and moving resolutions on matters of general public interest. The annual budget also should be placed before the Assembly for general discussion before the same was brought before the Council. The Member thought that the procedure suggested by him would be of immense benefit both to the Council and the Government and would serve to remedy the defects of the present Council. He requested the Government to accept the fundamental principles of the reforms proposed before appointing a committee to work out the details of the scheme.

Mr. M. Kochukrishna Pillai (Member, Neyyattinkara taluk) agreed with the suggestions made by those who spoke before him and dealt with the need for improving the Assembly and placing it on a statutory basis.

Mr. B. Krishna Pillai B. A., B. L. (Member, Trivandrum taluk) observed that the inauguration of the Reformed Legislative Council had placed the Assembly in a rather delicate position, and enumerated the various views held by different schools of political thinkers in the country in regard to the question of its continuance. He pointed out that the majority of the *intelligentia* of the country were for its continuance, though there were not wanting persons who thought that the existence of the Assembly and the Legislative Council would result in the creation of a bicameral legislature, with consequent duplication of functions. The Member was of opinion that, in view of the restrictions and limitations placed on the free exercise of the powers of the Council, the only alternative was to reform the Assembly so as to make it more useful and effective in the exercise of its essential functions. His main proposals were the following:—

(1) The Assembly should be placed on a statutory basis. In that connection he pointed out the evils resulting from its present authority which was nothing more than a Government notification which might be modified or amended according to the individual caprice or personal idiosyncracy of successive Dewans.

(2) The Assembly should be given the power of moving resolutions so as to enable the members to express their collective opinion on matters of public importance. The power of interpellating the Government and eliciting answers from them should also be conferred on the Assembly. The Member contended that the powers enumerated above were inherent in the constitution of the Assembly, but could not be freely exercised by the members as they were deliberately withheld from them.

The Member then urged that the following new powers should be given to the Assembly.

(1) No new tax should be imposed, and no existing tax reduced, enhanced or abolished except with the consent of the Assembly and no new public loan or undertaking committing the finances of the State should be contracted, nor any concession or monopoly accorded without the previous sanction of the Assembly. The annual draft budget of the State should be placed before the Assembly for an expression of its opinion.

(2) All legislative measures should be placed before the Assembly for approval before they were passed into law.

(3) The Assembly should have perfect freedom of discussion on all matters excepting questions relating to the Ruling Family and those connected with religion.

The Member also suggested that the franchise should be widened so as to make the Assembly a more democratic and representative body than it was at present. He next dealt with the question whether the acceptance of his scheme of reform would result in the creation of a bicameral legislature without overlapping functions causing deadlocks and *impasse*. The only question for consideration was whether the existence of two legislative bodies would conduce to the better and more

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efficient administration of the State. The evils contemplated by the opponents of the scheme could be obviated by the evolution of suitable conventions and wholesome traditions under the sympathetic guidance of the Government.

The Member next illustrated how deadlocks between the two bodies could be avoided by adopting the appropriate *modus operandi*. He concluded his representation with a prayer for the early appointment of a committee with a majority of non-official members to work out the details of the scheme submitted by him.

Mr. Kanakku Sankaranarayanan Krishnan (Member, Tiruvalla taluk) referred to the divergent opinions on the ending or mending of the Assembly and expressed his satisfaction at the announcement of the Dewan in his Address that it was not the intention of the Government to end the Assembly. He then stated that the general trend of opinion among the people was that the Assembly should continue to exist in an improved form. Both the Legislative Council and the Assembly should be so reconstituted as to bring about co-ordination of work between the two popular institutions. For that purpose a committee should be appointed as early as possible so that it might work out a practical scheme for the consideration of the Government.

Mr. Krishnan Paramesvaran (Member, Parur taluk) regretted the utter lack of interest evinced by the Government in the matter of reforming the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, in spite of numerous representations on the subject at previous sessions of the Assembly and persistent agitation both in the press and on the platform. He also deplored the rather abrupt termination of the labours of the committee which was constituted for the consideration of the draft rules for the reorganisation of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. The lines of reform suggested by the Member were :—

(i) that no measure involving fresh taxation should be given effect to without the previous sanction of the Assembly ;

(ii) that the Assembly should have power to interpellate the Government and move resolutions on all matters of public importance, except those relating to the Royal Family and relations with the Paramount Power;

(iii) that the legislative programme of the Government as also the budget estimate of every year should be placed before the Assembly for consideration ;

(iv) that the franchise for the Assembly should be widened ; and

(v) that the resolutions passed by the Assembly when supported by the Legislative Council should become law, subject to the Royal veto.

In conclusion, the Member prayed that the Assembly might be invested with the same powers as were now possessed by similar bodies in other Indian States.

Mr. M. P. Jacob (Member, Municipal Council, Parur) said that Travancore was ripe for constitutional reforms on the lines of the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme and could not understand why there should be any delay in the matter. The Member thought that the following lines might be adopted in the reform of the Assembly.

(1) The power of moving resolutions on matters of public importance should be conferred on the Assembly.

(2) The popular character of the Assembly should be improved.

(3) The franchise should be extended to all major subjects of His Highness the Maha Raja.

(4) All subjects should be discussed except those relating to the old treaty relations with the British Government and those relating to the Royal Family.

(5) No new tax should be imposed without the sanction of the Assembly.

(6) All Bills passed either by the Government or by the Legislative Council should be considered by the Assembly.

(7) The Assembly should be placed on a statutory basis.

(8) Though His Highness the Maha Raja had the inherent power of vetoing any resolution that might be passed by the Assembly, any resolution passed by the Assembly or the Legislative Council should ordinarily be accepted by the Government.

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A joint representation *re.* the reconstruction of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the introduction of other reforms was then presented, signed by 69 members.

President's reply.—Your suggestions for the better working of the Assembly and for giving it larger powers such as discussing the budget and asking interpellations are noted.

President.—Gentlemen, we have now finished all the representations, those on the reform of the Assembly being the last. It will give me very great pleasure to submit, to His Gracious Highness the Maha Raja, the joint representation of the members of the Twentieth Session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, as regards the reconstitution of the Assemby and the introduction of administrative reforms. (*Cheers.*)

Let me just add a personal note. I wish to offer my best thanks to the members of the Assembly for the congratulations I have received from them on the honour which has fallen to me of presiding over this Assembly and conducting its deliberations. All of us, gentlemen, have had a strenuous time, but at the same time, an instructive and educative time of it, during the period the Assembly has been in session. There cannot be any doubt that a very large number of subjects which have been dilated upon, relating, as they do, to questions of general policy and other important matters, require careful study, especially in the case of one situated like myself. If I have not been able to give you categorical replies, it has been, I assure you, in good measure, due to the nature of some of the subjects themselves, as also, I am free to admit, to my want of sufficient familiarity with them. But, all the same, I may assure you that I have been trying to do the best I could in understanding your representations and in giving answers to them. I may also tell you that Government feel thankful to you for the various suggestions made in handling the different subjects that have come up for consideration before this Assembly. (*Cheers.*)

Mr. S. A. Hariharakrishna Aiyar (Member, Shencottah taluk): Sir, on behalf of the members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, I beg leave to convey to you our heartfelt thanks for the kind and sympathetic manner in which you have listened to our representations and replied to them. We, the members, and the people whom we represent, are much indebted to His Highness' Government for the various reforms and other boons conferred upon the people and we express our unfathomable gratitude to His Gracious Highness the Maha Raja. Sir, we request that you may be kind enough to convey to His Gracious Highness the Maha Raja, our gratitude and loyalty to the throne and also our fervent prayers to the Almighty for His Highness' long life, sound health and continued prosperity. (*Cheers.*)

President.—It will give me great pleasure to convey to His Highness your feelings of profound loyalty and prayers to the Almighty for His Highness the Maha Raja's long life, health and prosperity.

Mr. Nagur Miran Miranan Mira Rowther (Member, Nominated), *Rev. P. J. John* (Member, Nominated) and *Mr. Kanakku Sankaranarayanan Krishnan* (Member, Tiruvalla taluk) then spoke thanking the Government and the President and expressing their loyalty to His Highness the Maha Raja and praying for His Highness' health and happiness.

President.—I feel very thankful to you, gentlemen, for the kind things you have said about me. It will give me very great pleasure to convey to His Gracious Highness the Maha Raja your loyalty and devotion to His Highness' throne and person. (*Cheers.*)

Cheers were proposed by the members to His Majesty the King Emperor and to His Highness the Maha Raja and to the President.

The Assembly dispersed at 2-6 P. M.

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